The Melville Society NEWSLETTER

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Enclosed with this copy of the Newsletter is the *Annual Melville Bibliography, 1951*, compiled by Stuart C. Sherman, John H. Birss, and Gordon Roper. The cost of multilithing was generously borne by the Providence (R.I.) Public Library.

The bibliography should be of considerable interest and use to all our members, and it is hoped that the project can be continued on an annual basis.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

A report of the annual meeting of the Society, which the secretary regrets having been unable to attend, is kindly supplied by retiring president Willard Thorp:

The annual meeting of the Melville Society was held in the Conference Room of the Lamont Library (Harvard University) at three-thirty o'clock on December 29, 1952. About 25 members attended. The program proved so stimulating and illuminating that it is to be regretted that there were not more members present to hear it. The absent ones may have been seeking rest and refreshment after nearly three days of M.L.A. papers and politics.

Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf's account of the later Melville as a family man and of her early interest in his writing and his fame was as delightful as it was new. The intimacy and immediacy of her remarks, as well as the fact, of course, that Mrs. Metcalf was the speaker, brought Herman Melville very close to those who were in the room.

The next speaker, Howard Horsford, reviewed the significant contributions of recent biographical studies, confining himself chiefly to the work of Gilman, Davis, Leyda, and Howard. Mr. Horsford devoted some time to the question of whether it is possible or desirable to exclude critical evaluations in writing Melville biography. Walter Bezanson next presented a witty and searching appraisal of Chase's *Herman Melville: A Critical Study*. He concentrated on the effectiveness of the four methods of analysis which, in the main, Chase used. Harrison Hayford followed this with a well balanced review of Arvin's *Herman Melville*. He addressed himself to two questions: Is Arvin's book the best study of Melville's life and work, as many are inclined to think? Is Arvin's use of the psychological approach too extreme, and is it at all points supported by the facts? The last speaker, Merton Sealts, reviewed Thompson's *Melville's Quarrel With God*, analyzing both the method of the book and the effectiveness of the method as Thompson applies it to particular works.

These four papers constituted such a detailed and responsible over-all review of recent Melville scholarship and criticism that several members expressed the wish that they should be mimeographed and thus made available to all members of the Society. (Mrs. Metcalf's paper will be incorporated in her forthcoming book.)

The business meeting then followed. In the absence of Tyrus Hillway, his "Report of the Secretary for the Year 1952" was read by President Thorp. The question of the make-up of the Executive Committee was considered. Because Mrs. Metcalf had asked to be relieved from serving as president in 1953, it was agreed that presidents-to-be should move up one year and that Harrison Hayford should be added to the Executive Committee. The "order of succession" is therefore fixed as follows: Merton M. Sealts (1953), William H. Gilman (1954), Walter E. Bezanson (1955), Harrison Hayford (1956). It was also the sense of the meeting that Mrs. Metcalf should be asked to continue as a member of the Executive Committee. To this she agreed.

The president (as secretary) then read a letter from Robert G. Newman, librarian of the Berkshire Athenaeum, in which he announced that the Herman Melville Memorial Room will be dedicated in April, 1953, and asked whether the Melville Society would care to hold a meeting in the Athenaeum at that time. It was the concensus that it would be impossible to arrange a meeting for April. It was voted that Luther S. Mansfield should be asked to serve as an official representative of the Society to the ceremonies of dedication. Mr. Mansfield agreed to this proposal.

Correspondence from Stuart C. Sherman of the Providence Public Library was then read, regarding publication of the Melville Bibliography. Howard P. Vincent generously offered to underwrite the expenses of reproduction in mimeograph form, without any cost to the Society.

Mr. Vincent next presented a brief review of the present status of the Hendricks House edition of Melville's works.

He noted that efforts to persuade Mr. Hendricks to transfer the edition to a publisher who might bring out the remaining volumes on a more regular schedule have failed. Mr. Hendricks is determined to carry on with the edition as expeditiously as he can.

The question of dues, raised by the secretary's report, was then considered. The members present were reluctant to reduce the dues from two dollars to one, even though some members have withdrawn because the dues seemed too high. The secretary was asked to consider whether it would be feasible to ask two dollars of those who wish to receive all publications and services and one dollar of those who are simply listed as members.

This report should not be concluded without a word about the two exhibitions of Melville material which the Harvard University Library arranged for members of the M.L.A. and the Melville Society. In the comprehensive exhibition of books and manuscripts in the Widener Library two cases were devoted to Melville. Among the items displayed, possibly most notable were the manuscripts of *John Marr* and *Billy Budd* and the only known copy of the separate issue of "The Story of Toby." In the corridor outside the meeting room, 16 magnificent new *Moby-Dick* paintings by Gil Wilson were also exhibited. Mrs. Metcalf made the arrangements for this second exhibition.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 P. M.

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 1952

Following is a condensed version of the Secretary's Report which was read to members attending the Annual Meeting:

The Society now has on its membership roll 100 names, including six honorary members, six libraries, and one exchange membership (Thoreau Society). One member, Victor Hugo Paltsits, died during the year. There has been some reduction in the number of members since dues were increased from one dollar to two dollars.

The Newsletter continues its policy of serving as a medium for the exchange of information about our members, their work, their unsolved problems, and general developments in the field of Melville scholarship. It makes no attempt to publish studies or to compete with scholarly journals. Its present format was chosen as an economical means of providing an attractive publication. The editor depends for its contents very largely upon communications received from the members and upon the routine checking of other sources of information. Suggestions for its improvement are always welcome.

During the past year plans have been formulated for the publication in a single volume of the papers read at the various *Moby-Dick* centennial celebrations. An editorial committee (Tyrus Hillway, William H. Gilman, and Luther S. Mansfield) has gathered the papers together and is working on details of publication. The Southern Methodist University Press has expressed strong interest in the project. There are still some serious problems to be faced. A number of the papers have been published elsewhere, and there is much variation among the papers as to style, scholarly content, and appeal to readers. A final decision on the matter of publication is expected shortly.

The year began with a financial deficit of $54.51, accounted for largely by the amount still due at that time ($48.20) to the Harvard University Library for offprints. A further payment of $25 was made in 1952 on the Harvard account, leaving an unpaid balance of $23.20. All other bills have been paid when due. The treasury showed a balance on December 23, 1952, of $39.98, with one issue of the Newsletter still to be published. Since the Newsletter costs us approximately $20 per issue to print and mail, we are within $3.22 of balancing our budget for the year. Seventeen members have not paid their dues for 1952. If only two of these will send in their checks, the treasury can report a surplus instead of a deficit for the year.

NOTES

The Sock and Buskin Society of Brown University presented the play, *Billy Budd*, in Providence on December 15-17, 1952.

A movement is well under way in Albany, New York, to place an appropriate marker on the former Melville home (3 Clinton Square) in that city. William H. Gilman will assist with the writing of the inscription. Sponsors of the movement are the Friends of the Library (Albany Public Library) and C. H. (Tip) Roseberry, the "Roving Reporter" of the Albany *Times-Union*.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Executive committee: Willard Thorp (1952), president; Eleanor Melville Metcalf (1953); Merton M. Sealts (1954); William H. Gilman (1955); Walter E. Bezanson (1956). The annual membership fee of two dollars includes subscription to the Newsletter and other services. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.